

IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 247 HONORING NATIONAL DONOR DAY

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2000

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, today I join my colleague and good friend, Representative KAREN THURMAN, in support of House Concurrent Resolution 247, to honor National Donor Day and recognize the importance of organ, tissue, bone marrow & blood donation.

With more than ten people dying every day and approximately 70,000 Americans currently awaiting organs, it is clear that our nation is facing a crisis. This resolution will help raise awareness and increase donations nationwide—it is a meaningful step toward bringing an end to our nation's current predicament.

A number of businesses, foundations, health organizations, and the Department of Health and Human Services have previously designated February 12th as National Donor Day. The first two National Donor Days succeeded in raising a total of almost 17,000 units of blood, adding over 2,400 potential donors to the National Marrow Donor Program Registry, and included mass distribution of organ and tissue pledge cards. This Concurrent Resolution supports National Donor Day, encourages Americans to learn about and openly discuss donation, and calls on the President to issue a proclamation to demonstrate support for organ, tissue, blood and bone marrow donation.

Research points to a clear need for public education and incentive programs to increase organ donation. This Congress, I also introduced legislation, H.R. 941, the "Gift of Life Congressional Medal Act of 1999," to create a commemorative medal that honors organ donors and their families. This Act is intended to draw attention to this life-saving issue and to send a clear message that donating one's organs is a selfless act worth the profound respect of our Nation. I hope Members would also consider this effort to increase donations.

This problem is clear—there are not enough organs to meet the needs of patients nationwide. Let's support initiatives such as H.R. 941, to create an organ donor medal, and H. Con. Res. 247, to honor National Donor Day and recognize the importance of organ, tissue, bone marrow & blood donation. Such initiatives will help raise awareness, increase donations nationwide, and both are meaningful steps toward bringing an end to the lack of available organs nationwide.

RECOGNIZING THE MILLENNIUM PLEDGE MADE BY STUDENTS AT SLEEPY HOLLOW ELEMENTARY, FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

HON. THOMAS M. DAVIS

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2000

Mr. DAVIS of Virginia. Speaker, on Thursday, January 16, 2000, I joined students,

teachers, and school officials at Sleepy Hollow Elementary School as the final student signatures were added to the school's "Millennium Pledge." These students have decided to enter the new millennium as leaders dedicated to making their world more respectful and tolerant. In a campaign spearheaded by Sleep Hollow's student council, I praise the students for committing themselves to this endeavor.

These students are taking an admirable and challenging step. The plan is simple, action oriented, and it allows each and every student to assume a leadership position that can truly make a difference in their everyday lives.

The pledge kicks off a year-long character education campaign at the school. After student council members added their signatures on January 16th, the pledges were hung outside classrooms to serve as a reminder of their resolution, which reads:

With my signature, I recognize that I possess the power to affect the world around me. It is my pledge to use this power to spread kindness and respect, to be accepting and tolerant, and to walk away from negative and aggressive situations. As a future leader of America it is my resolution to enter this new millennium as a nation that values life and respects our rights to live and learn in a safe society. I am the future of America. The future begins today, and it begins with me.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I again would like to commend these fine young students at Sleepy Hollow Elementary for their courage and strength in accepting this challenge from their peers. These students have signed a pledge making "kindness and respect" their resolution for the new millennium. This is a pledge I would encourage all people, young and old, to take.

INTRODUCTION OF BROKEN PROMISES RETIREE HEALTH LEGISLATION

HON. GERALD D. KLECZKA

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2000

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Broken Promises Retiree Health Act. This legislation would help retirees obtain health insurance if their coverage is canceled and would ensure that retirees are given fair warning before their employers terminate their health coverage.

The need for this legislation is clear. Far too many companies are breaking their promises to retired workers by eliminating retiree health benefits. A recent report by Mercer/Foster-Higgins found that in 1999, only 35 percent of large employers offered health benefits to their early retirees. This is a decline of six percent in the past five years alone. As a result, thousands of retirees have been stranded without health care—health care they were promised, and health care they earned through their long years of service.

This national trend hit home in my district on August 5, 1996 when the Pabst Brewing Company announced that they were eliminating the health benefits plans for almost 750 retirees and their families.

Seniors in my district and throughout the country rely on their employers' commitment

to provide health insurance in their golden years. When a company revokes that coverage, many older Americans are trapped in the limbo between employee health benefits and Medicare coverage. Retirees should not be faced with the vulnerability of being uninsured when irresponsible employers break their promise to provide retiree health coverage.

The legislation I am introducing today would establish a critical safety-net for these retirees. Through this bill, retirees who were over the age of 55 when their health benefits were terminated can choose between two new health coverage options. First, for a monthly premium of approximately \$400 per month, retirees would be allowed to buy into the Medicare program. Or, if the employer is continuing to offer health benefits to its current employees, retirees could choose to buy the same health coverage for themselves and their families that the company offers current employees. Both options ensure that health coverage would be available to retirees until they turn 65 and become eligible for Medicare.

In addition, this legislation would require employers to give 6 months notice to retirees of any reduction in their health benefits and would also require the Labor Department to certify that these changes meet the requirements of the collective bargaining agreement.

Legislation cannot heal the pain of employer betrayal after a lifetime of service, but it can renew the promise of retiree health coverage.

Mr. Speaker, we must act now. I ask my colleagues to show their support for retired workers and their families by cosponsoring this bill.

HONORING THE HERSHEY KIXX SYNCHRONIZED SKATING TEAM UPON THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT IN RECEIVING THE BRONZE MEDAL AT THE EASTERN DIVISION SYNCHRONIZED TEAM SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS

HON. GEORGE W. GEKAS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 10, 2000

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Hershey KIXX Synchronized Skating Team for receiving the Bronze Medal at the Eastern Synchronized Team Skating Championships in Lowell, Massachusetts.

The "Synchro East 2000" Competition included teams in the Eastern Division of the USFSA with the gold and silver medal winners in the qualifying division advancing to Nationals in Detroit in February 2000. With the coming Olympic games in 2002 in Salt Lake City, Utah, synchronized team skating will be added as a new Olympic sport. Synchronized skating is guided by the United States Figure Skating Association, which divides all competitors into fourteen individual brackets. Within each bracket, skaters are divided into groups depending on skill level, age and style. Each team usually contains between eight and twenty members. The teams skate in formations which are judged in a variety of categories which include artistry, speed, and difficulty, while onlookers are marveled, mystified, and enthused by a wide range of daring